

The Second Judicial District Children’s Court has a new Presiding Judge

The Honorable Catherine A. Begaye is the new Presiding Judge of the Children’s Court Division of the Second Judicial District Court.

The Court’s Chief Judge, the Honorable Marie Ward, announced Judge Begaye’s appointment on May 2, 2022.

Judge Begaye was appointed to the bench in January 2021. At the time of that appointment, she was serving as a Children’s Court Hearing Officer.



**Presiding Children’s Court Judge
Catherine A. Begaye**

During her tenure as a hearing officer Judge Begaye, a member of the Navajo Nation, helped launch the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Court. This was the sixth ICWA Court in the country, and the first in New Mexico.

“I am honored by this appointment and I take on my new role with the full support of my fellow Children’s Court judges. I will continue to champion the collaboration with and between our justice partners for a safe community and strong families,” said Judge Begaye.

Succeeding Judge Ward

Judge Begaye takes the mantle of Presiding Children’s Court Judge from Judge Ward, who had been serving in two roles since being elected Chief Judge in September 2021.

“I am very grateful for Judge Begaye’s hard work and her willingness to serve as the Presiding Judge of Children’s Court,” Chief Judge Ward said.

Judge Begaye is a graduate of UNM Law School, where she was the Editor in Chief of the New Mexico Law Review and a Dean’s Award recipient for being a student who made outstanding contributions to the law school community.

Prior to joining the Court as a hearing officer, Judge Begaye was a defense attorney representing juveniles and adults in District and Appellate courts. She also worked with children and families in abuse and neglect cases, and this was where she found her calling.

She is the Chair of the Children’s Court Rules Committee, a member of the Tribal-State Judicial Consortium, a committee member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and serves on many other committees that are committed to improving outcomes for youth and families in New Mexico.

